

Minutes for the ABAC meeting of May 21, 2014

Board members attending were Ron Sender, Jack Johnson, Stephan Miller, Doug Greenfield, Christopher Tonkin, Phil Goff and Scott Smith. Joey Glushko and Rachael Stark (Walking in Arlington) were also present.

*Approval of the minutes of the April meeting. The minutes of the April meeting were approved, as amended, by unanimous vote.

Introductions were made all around. Rachael Stark represents Walking in Arlington and was present to participate in the discussion about the relationship between cyclists and pedestrians.

Green Routes Coalition. Phil told us that The Green Routes Coalition (GRC) is a group advocating for connecting up the bits and pieces of bikeway in the Commonwealth. They are lobbying the DCR to more seriously consider connecting all the existing greenway trails. The GRC's mission is to generally elevate the importance of these connections. In order to further these goals, Phil is looking for existing advocacy groups, such as ABAC, to sign on in support of this goal. He told us that EALS, WalkBoston and LivableStreets are already supporting this effort. He would like ABAC to vote to support the coalition and back up the vote with a written statement. Jack suggested that the endorsement should be from the Town as a whole. Joey thought that we should formulate a letter and submit it to the Selectmen for their endorsement.

*Christopher proposed a motion that Phil draft a letter for ABAC's approval that will then be sent to the Selectmen for their endorsement. The motion passed unanimously.

Bike-pedestrian conflicts. Rachael told us that bikes have replaced cars as the vehicles most complained about by pedestrians that she's spoken with. Phil thinks that is partially a consequence of the increased number of bikes and pedestrians especially on the Bikeway. Joey brought up the possibility of widening the Bikeway with a pedestrian lane. Once again, we came to the conclusion that, at least in Arlington, the right-of-way is often not wide enough. Scott added that many on-call stop lights in town are not sensitive to bikes, forcing bikes to run the lights, encouraging law-breaking. We discussed the possible causes of potential conflicts and how we can work to mitigate them. Stephan commented that, on the Bikeway, there is a lack of empathy on the part of both bicyclists and pedestrians, but he felt that a large minority of the pedestrians view the Bikeway as a sidewalk, and that many conflicts that are occurring could be avoided by slower traffic, be it bicyclist or pedestrian, keeping to the right and looking before crossing the right-of-way. We agreed that this should be an ongoing discussion.

Jack reported on the breakout of the National Bike Summit session titled "Breaking the Scofflaw Perception." Running red lights, stopping for crosswalks, riding on sidewalks and riding the wrong way are the major infractions which irritate people and are dangerous. There are five user groups that the LAB is trying to educate: cyclists, police, judges, pedestrians and motorists. He told us that law enforcement needs the correct emphasis. He added that vehicular enforcement in most areas is too complex and discourages police from giving citations to anyone. Phil thought that improved infrastructure on Mass. Ave. would draw cyclists off the Bikeway, moderating bikeway traffic during rush hours. Ron added that, on the Bikeway, we need more signage to encourage correct behavior. He is puzzled by the reluctance to have a simple set of rules posted at intervals to make it clear how to behave. Rachael suggested that we develop a brochure that can be handed out at Town Day and other venues. We told her that we have written a brochure in cooperation with the police which could be revised to serve the current need.

Report on TAC activities. Scott reported on the road striping issue on Mass. Ave. to the west of the Center. He told us that most of that stretch of Mass. Ave. must have four automobile lanes. The exception is near Whole Foods where the number of lanes could be dropped to three which would facilitate the installation of bike lanes and shortening crosswalks. He also told us that we need to educate the public as to the meaning of shared lane makings (sharrows). Phil has found that some motorists are afraid to drive over them causing underuse of the rightmost lane.

Report on Arlington Bike Breakfast. All reports indicate that this event was a big success. Many representatives of the town were present and, in spite of the miserable weather, it was well attended.

BIKE-Arlington Tour. Christopher reported a reasonable turnout and a nice ride. He noted that the police escort was very helpful in improving the safety of the ride.

Report on Spring Bikeway Cleanup. Stephan told us that, despite the fact that it rained on both the designated date and the rain date, the turnout was decent (on both days) and, at this point, the Bikeway is reasonably clean.

Tri-community meeting. We reviewed the agenda for the upcoming meeting. Joey told us that she would like to see agenda items that are doable and that involve all the towns. She would also like to see all the engineering items left until after the acceptance of the Toole Report. Toole Design will be making a final presentation of the report in Lexington next week.

Bikeway User Counts. Joey would like to send the counts we have taken in recent years to the Selectmen with a document of explanation. She also told us that she would like to count bike traffic in other parts of town on and off the Bikeway. We spent some time reviewing Joey's draft document and suggested improvements.

Other Topics.

Town Day. September 13, Christopher will pay the fee and reserve our place.

Tourist Information Center. The Committee on Tourism and Economic Development would like to have bike racks installed outside of the new Tourist Information Center in Uncle Sam Park. We discussed the various possibilities. We concluded that one of the racks behind the Coldwell Banker office should be moved beside the Information Shed.

*The meeting was adjourned at 9:31 pm.

*indicates that a vote of the ABAC Board was taken.
Minutes submitted by Stephan Miller.